on Plant & Machinery subject to a ceiling of Rs. 30 lakhs.

5. An interest subsidy of 3% on the working capital loans would be provided for a period of ten years after the commencement of production.

6. Comprehensive Insurance Scheme for new industrial units.

(c) and (d) Balanced regional development through locational dispersal of industries has been one of the principal objectives of the successive Five Year Plans. Government of India has specified 123 Districts as industrially backward districts under category 'A' and category 'B'. With a view to achieving balanced regional development and particularly promoting industrialisation of backward areas, Government has provided various incentives/concessions from time to time, the important ones being the Growth Centre Scheme, Transport Subsidy Scheme, and the Integrated Infrastructural Development Scheme (IIDS).

Impact of falling Tobacco Exports on Farmers in Andhra Pradesh

*375. DR. MOHAN BABU: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Tobacco Board has studied the impact of falling exports on the farming community in Andhra Pradesh;

(b) whether it is a fact that demand has declined due to such falling tobacco exports;

(c) what steps the Tobacco Board is taking to revive the tobacco economy of Andhra Pradesh;

(d) whether any survey has been done by NCAER or other such body to improve the tobacco economy; and

(e) if so, the full details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) and (b) The total quantity and value of export of tobacco (manufactured & unmanufactured) during the last four years are as follows:—

	Quantity in tons	Value in Rs. crores
1994-95	53731	254.75
1995-96	87094	446.82
1996-97	116910	756.77
1997-98	142896	1058.50
1998-99 (April)	7330	66.46
1997-98 (April)	2009	14.55

(Source: DGCI&S, Calcutta)

Exports of tobacco have shown an increasing trend during the last four years.

(c) Some of the steps taken to enhance exports of tobacco and tobacco products include, inter-alia, reorientation of the domestic production of tobacco to meet changing international needs, enhancement of quality and productivity levels, monitoring and strict control of pesticide residues, aligning grading to international standards, and permitting imports for product development.

(d) and (e) Yes, Sir. NCAER conducted a study in 1994 on Export Potential of Tobacco Sector. Some of the recommendations made in the study, inter-alia, include enhancing production of exportable varieties of tobacco, involving domestic cigarette manufacturers in the area of commercial cultivation of exportable type of tobacco, educating farmers on optimal utilisation of fertilisers to reduce unit cost of production, aligning grading at farmers level to international standards, monitoring and control of pesticide residues, dissemination of international market information to exporters and growers, improving quality and packaging of Indian cigarettes, developing international bidis and exploring new narkets, and review of taxation burden

on cigarette industry to enhance cigarette exports.

Compulsory usage of Jute Bags

*377. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there is widespread violation of laws regarding compulsory usage of jute bags by cement units in the country; and

(b) if so, the details in this regard and action, if any, taken against any such units?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) and (b) The provisions of Jute Packaging Materials Act, 1987 (JPMA) were not implemented for Cement Industry till April, 1996 as the matter was pending before the Supreme Court. Subsequently, several representations have been made to the Standing Advisory Committee appointed under the Act in Ministry of Textiles, regarding unsuitability of jute packaging for cement, because of hygroscopic nature of the commodity, loss on account of seepage and because of health hazards to the workers, etc. The Standing Advisory Committee has since made its recommendations which are under consideration of the Government.

New National Housing Policy

*378. SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have lately evolved a new National Housing Policy;

(b) if so, the main features thereof; and

(c) the steps being taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI RAM JETHMALANI): (a) and (b) A new National Housing and Habitat Policy is under consideration of the Government. The Policy is yet to be finalised and approved by the Government.

(c) The policy can be implemented only after it is approved.

Instrumentation Limited, Palghat

*379. SHRI O. RAJAGOPAL: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has received any representation from the employees of Instrumentation Limited, Palghat (Kerala) that the Palghat Unit should be made into an autonomous unit as the tagging of this unit with the loss making Kota Unit, works against the interests of the employees of Palghat Unit; and

(b) if so, what steps are being taken in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF INDUSTRY (SHRI SIKANDER BAKHT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Revival Plan formulated by Instrumentation Limited envisages that the Palghat unit would be converted into a joint venture company. Final decision would be taken by BIFR which is a quasi-judicial body.

Jobs for Disabled and Handicapped

*380. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of disabled and handicapped persons has risen in absolute terms in the country while those getting jobs has been going down;

(b) if so, the details thereof with particular reference to Maharashtra; and